

## CYPE(5)-20-20 - Paper to note 19

Lynne Neagle, MS  
Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Dr. Sarah Witcombe-Hayes  
Wales Coordinator  
Everyone's Business Campaign  
Maternal Mental Health Alliance

28<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear Lynne Neagle, Chair of Children, Young People and Education Committee

The Maternal Mental Health Alliance (MMHA) is writing in response to the follow up work that the Children, Young People and Education Committee has been undertaking on its inquiry into perinatal mental health in Wales.

The MMHA is an independent charity and coalition of 90+ UK organisations, working across the UK. We bring the sector together to speak with one voice, campaigning for change and supporting local systems to improve perinatal mental health care. Our [Everyone's Business campaign](#) aims to improve the lives of all women throughout the UK who experience perinatal mental health problems.

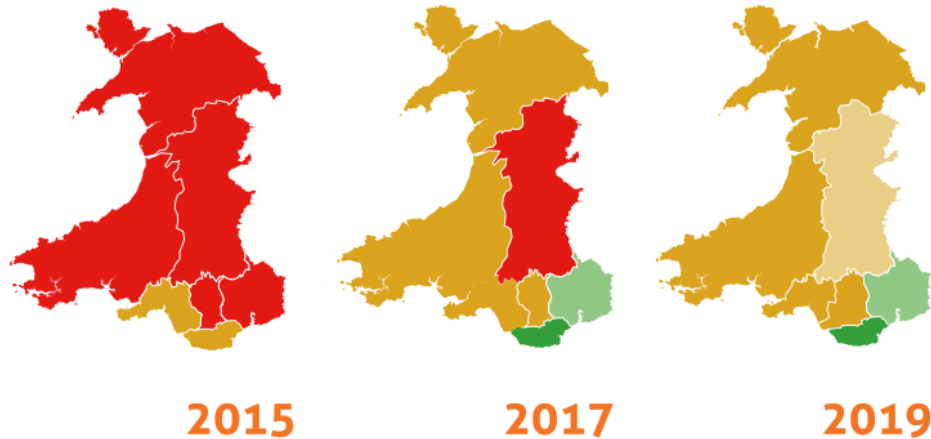
A key tool in our campaigning are our maps which visually chart each UK nation's progress towards meeting the CCQI perinatal quality network standards. The MMHA has been campaigning to 'turn the map green', as a crucial first step to ensuring all women throughout the UK who experience perinatal mental health problems receive the care they and their families need, wherever and whenever they need it.

We would like to draw the Committee's attention to the [latest MMHA maps](#), launched last week, which show that there has been a small improvement in services available to women and their families in [Wales](#) since 2017. The MMHA welcomes encouraging signs of progress, including increased investment in specialist perinatal mental health services since 2015, plans to open an interim Mother and Baby Unit, and Welsh Government's commitment to improving access and quality of perinatal mental health services as indicated in the [Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan](#). We also recognise the work of The Children, Young People and Education Committee and the Wales Perinatal Mental Health Network, which has been instrumental in driving improvements forward.

However, we are disappointed that this progress has not translated into significant developments in perinatal mental services for women and their families. New data shows that only two out of the seven (29%) health boards in Wales meet CCQI perinatal quality network standards, and women in Wales still face a postcode lottery when it comes to perinatal mental health care. Service development has not been equal across all health

boards, meaning the area in which a new or expectant mum lives continues to determine the support she and her family can access.

## The story so far



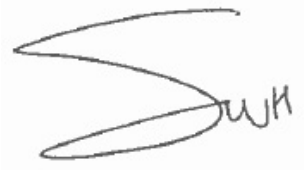
Specialist perinatal mental health services save lives, they provide expert treatment and are a crucial foundation for supporting and driving improvements across the wider perinatal mental health pathway. When an area has fully resourced, high-quality specialist services, with a team of trained staff, it can make all the difference to early identification of perinatal mental health problems, mother's quality of care, recovery time and support for her, her partner and their relationship with the baby.

In the wake of COVID-19, where we know that families are facing higher levels of anxiety, and perinatal mental health experts predict an increase in referrals to specialist services, we feel there is greater need for decision makers to [PLAN](#) to address the mental health needs of women and their families during and beyond the pandemic. We are concerned that the current funding for perinatal mental health services may not be sufficient to 'turn the map green' in Wales and ensure all services meet quality standards. We also worry about the impact the current crisis may have on reaching the crucial milestones in the Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan.

As we begin to move toward recovery from COVID-19, we feel it is important to understand more about the impact of the pandemic on the perinatal mental health work plans, as raised by the Minister for Health and Social Services in his last update to the Committee (ref: MA/VG/1382/20). When it is deemed an appropriate time, we would welcome an update from the Minister on the development of plans to open the interim mother and baby unit. Once normal monitoring arrangements have resumed, we would also welcome an update on progress against perinatal mental health services achieving the All Wales Standards and the CCQI standards.

The MMHA would welcome any opportunities to support the Committee's work to improve perinatal mental health care for women and their families in Wales. We are available to provide further written or oral evidence, should this be useful.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by the initials 'WH'.

Dr. Sarah Witcombe-Hayes

Wales Coordinator

Everyone's Business Campaign, Maternal Mental Health Alliance